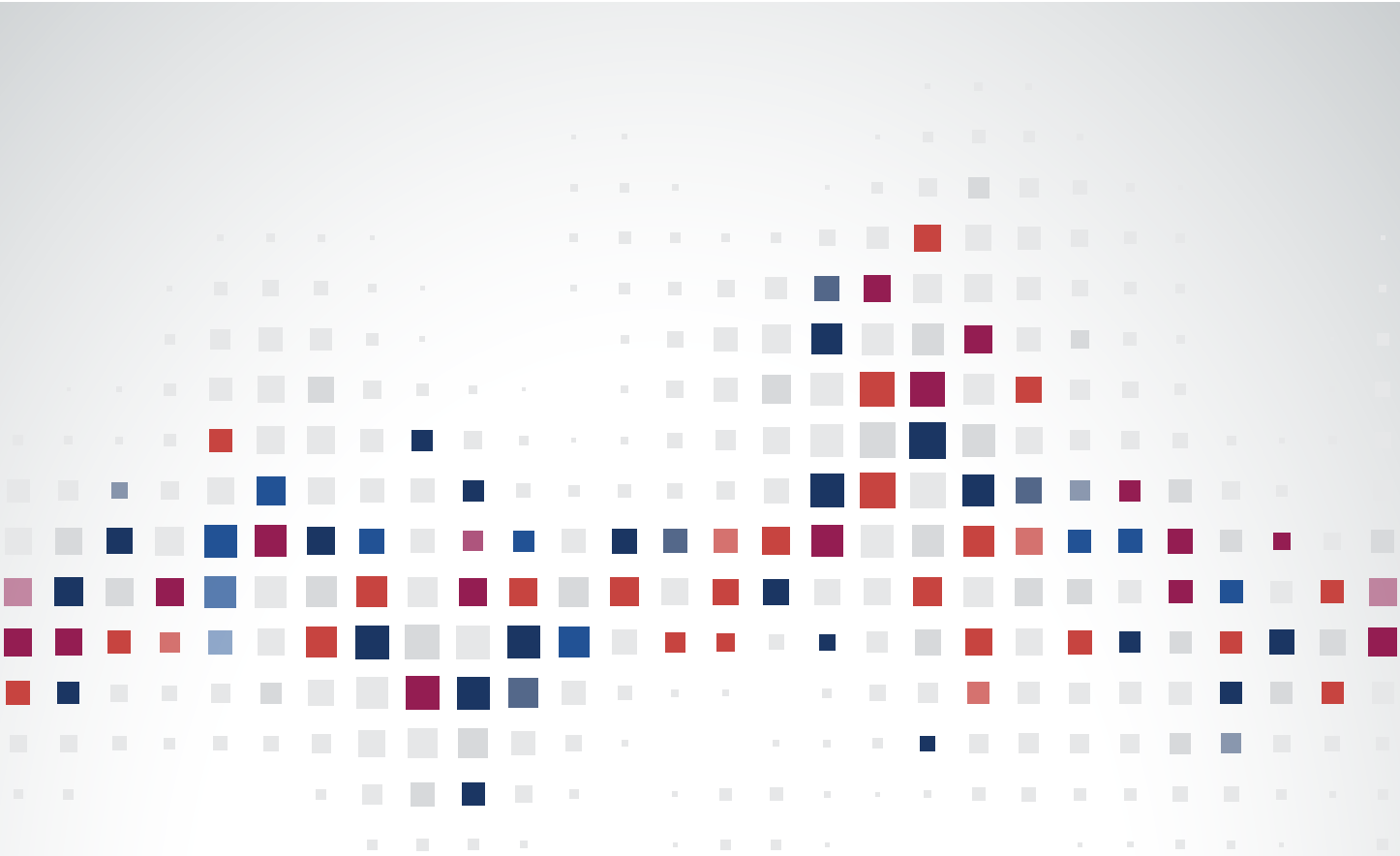

NC-SARA ANNUAL DATA REPORT:

Technical Report for Fall 2025 Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment & 2025 Out-of-State Learning Placements

NC SARA
National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements
MHEC • NEBHE • SREB • WICHE

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About SARA

Recognizing the growing demand for distance learning opportunities, higher education stakeholders – including state regulators and education leaders, accreditors, the U.S. Department of Education, and institutions – joined together in 2013 to establish the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA helps expand students' access to educational opportunities and ensures more efficient, consistent, and effective regulation of distance learning programs.

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is a voluntary agreement among member states, districts, and territories that establishes standards for the reciprocal authorization of institutions providing distance education across state lines. As of 2026, 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have voluntarily joined SARA. More than 2,400 institutions have received approval from their home state to participate in the agreement. To learn more, please visit NC-SARA's website.

About NC-SARA

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) is a private nonprofit **organization** [501(c)(3)] that coordinates the implementation of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) in collaboration with the four regional, interstate education compacts:

- Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC)
- New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE)
- Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)

NC-SARA supports the regional education compacts and states as they implement the agreement and carry out their SARA-related work. Additionally, NC-SARA facilitates information exchange among the regional education compacts, member states, territories, the District of Columbia, and SARA institutions regarding participation and compliance. Administration of the annual data reporting process is one of NC-SARA's functions.

To learn more, please visit NC-SARA's website.

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Introduction

The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) has collected, analyzed, and reported eleven years of exclusively distance education enrollment data and eight years of out-of-state learning placement data from SARA-participating institutions. The purpose of this technical report is to provide a summary and analysis of the most recent data, which were collected in 2026 for the year 2025. The report is organized into three sections:

- An introduction and overview of institutional participation in SARA.
- Data on exclusively distance education enrollment (EDEE).
- Data on out-of-state learning placements (OOSLP).

Why Data Collection is Required for SARA Participation

Collecting, analyzing, and reporting data about the interstate delivery of distance education are important parts of NC-SARA's mission, and SARA policy requires participating institutions to report EDEE and OOSLP data annually. Since its inception, NC-SARA has maintained a strong commitment to transparency in data reporting. Prior to joining SARA, many member states had already been collecting data from out-of-state institutions providing distance education in their state; therefore, data collection became an important element agreed upon during the creation of SARA. Data collection and reporting help measure the impact of SARA nationally and track changes in SARA-participating institutions and in SARA member states over time.

Institutions report data to NC-SARA through an online portal each spring. The reporting period, May 15 to June 15, follows the due date for the Fall Enrollment (EF) reports to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). For instance, institutions reported their 2025 data to NC-SARA in the spring of 2026. EDEE data are disaggregated by the state, territory, or district where the student is physically located while enrolled exclusively in distance education course(s). OOSLP data are disaggregated by the state, territory, or district where the learning placement is taking place.

Reporting instructions and screenshots of the online data reporting portal can be found in the *SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions*[1], available on the Institution Directions for Data Reporting webpage.

Commitment to Transparency in Data Reporting

Since its inception, NC-SARA has maintained a strong commitment to transparency in data reporting. While based on IPEDS EF reporting, the EDEE data that institutions report to NC-SARA may not match IPEDS exactly, because of the different approaches SARA uses to identify the location of military students, as well as the impact of branch campus reporting. Institutions self-report to NC-SARA, and there is currently no process to validate individual campus reporting and compare it to the IPEDS data submissions. In addition, there are institutions that report only to NC-SARA and not to IPEDS.

The SARA data are also publicly available to help institutions consider such questions any time they arise; the data set becomes richer with each year of data collection.

[1] *NC-SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions (2026* (Retrieved 8/31/2026).

Terms Used in Data Reporting

Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment

SARA uses the term "exclusively distance education enrollment" (EDEE) to describe student enrollment reported exclusively in distance education courses. This means students whose only enrollment in a given term is in distance education courses (i.e., no in-person courses). These data are the same as the data that IPEDS refers to as "Enrolled exclusively in distance education courses." For SARA reporting purposes, the EDEE is disaggregated by state. (See *Appendix A: Technical Notes* for more information on the IPEDS distance education definitions.)

Out-of-State Learning Placements

SARA uses the term "out-of-state learning placements" (OOSLP) for on-site learning placements that occur **in a state other than the home state of the institution**. They include activities such as clinical rotations, student teaching, internships, and other similar activities, many of which are related to workforce development needs and requirements.

Unlike EDEE reporting, there is no other existing national mechanism such as IPEDS for gathering and reporting OOSLP data. NC-SARA uses the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) system to categorize and report OOSLP and requires reporting by the two-digit CIP code only. Reporting OOSLP annually is required for institutions participating in SARA. This is the eighth year that reporting OOSLP has been mandatory. It is important to note that ***all*** on-the-ground, out-of-state learning placements are reported, not just those associated with distance education offerings. SARA does not currently require institutions to report virtual learning placements.

Some institutions participate in SARA so that they may offer OOSLP to their students, with no intention of offering courses or programs exclusively through distance education.

Definition of "State"

For the purposes of this report, "state" is defined as a state, commonwealth, organized territory, or district (District of Columbia) of the United States. Additionally, "non-SARA states" refers to California and the U.S. territories that do not participate in SARA.

Using the SARA Data

Many colleges and universities have staff that focus on data as a source of information for their future planning and development. The rich data collected by NC-SARA over the past several years may help institutional staff and other stakeholders better understand the distance education landscape in the state or region. These data also capture historical trends and may provide insights that could inform key decisions about distance education offerings.

SARA Data Dashboards

The technical report is supplemented with interactive data dashboards on the NC-SARA website. You may explore the data by region, state, institution, and SARA participation status using the Data Dashboards, including:

- Reporting institutions
- Total EDEE
- Incoming EDEE

- Outgoing EDEE
- Incoming OOSLP
- Outgoing OOSLP

The Data Dashboards can be used to consider EDEE and OOSLP trends in a state overall, trends reported by other institutions in a state and in nearby states, and the movement of students in and out of states, over time. The data may be used to project the need for new programs and inform other decisions impacted by enrollment trends in a state and neighboring states.

Methodology

In May 2026, NC-SARA sent email requests to contacts at 2,451 SARA-participating institutions, with a link to report Fall 2025 EDEE and calendar year 2025 OOSLP. NC-SARA received complete responses from 2,441 institutions. While no institution requested an exemption, 8 non-renewing institutions and 2 closed institutions were granted exemptions given their circumstances. NC-SARA staff recognize and appreciate the efforts of the staff at participating institutions for their commitment to their reporting obligations.

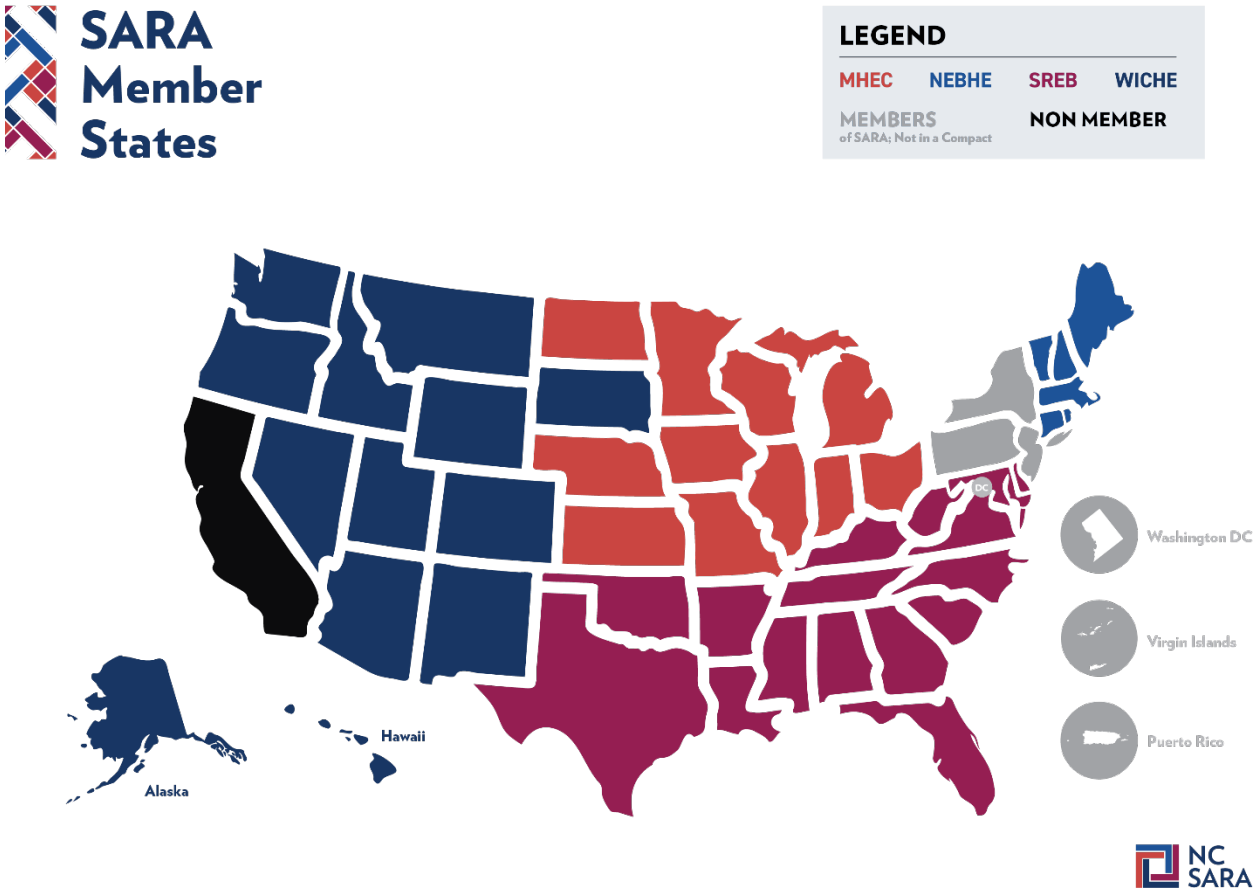
As has been the case since the first data collection for 2015 in the spring of 2016, institution staff may use the comment field in the online data reporting portal to provide context about their data.

SARA Member States and State Portal Entities

There were no new member states or organized territories accepted by SARA between the reporting windows for 2025and 2026. As of September 2026, all U.S. states except California are SARA members. In addition, the District of Columbia (DC) and the territories of Puerto Rico (PR) and the U.S. Virgin Islands (VI) are members of SARA. The following U.S. territories are currently not members of SARA: American Samoa (AS), Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and Guam (GU).

The map in Figure 1 shows the SARA states and territories and the regional compacts with which they are members or affiliated. States shown in gray are not members of a regional compact but have affiliated with one of the compacts for purposes of SARA.

Figure 1. Map of SARA States, Territories, & District



Summary of Results

2,441 institutions reported EDEE data for Fall 2025 and OOSLP data for calendar year 2025 to NC-SARA during the 2026 spring reporting period. Analysis of these data submissions revealed the following key findings:

- There was an increase of 37 reporting institutions – 1.5% – participating in SARA during the 2025 reporting period in 2026.
    - Public institutions made up 48.5% (1,183) of all institutions reporting data to NC-SARA;
    - Private nonprofit institutions represent 43.4% (1,059) of all institutions reporting data to NC-SARA;
    - Private for-profit institutions account for 7.7% (189) of all institutions reporting data to NC-SARA.
    - Ten tribal institutions reported to NC-SARA for 2025, representing 0.4% of the total.
- Consistent with prior reporting, the majority of out-of-state EDEE occurred in the private nonprofit sector (46.5%), while private for-profits reported 29% of out-of-state EDEE in

Fall 2025 and public institutions reported 24.4%. The ten tribal institutions reported 770 out-of-state EDEE, or 0.0%.

- The proportions of EDEE reported by sector remain consistent over time, indicating that public institutions are more likely to enroll in-state students exclusively via distance education, while private institutions are more likely to enroll out-of-state students.

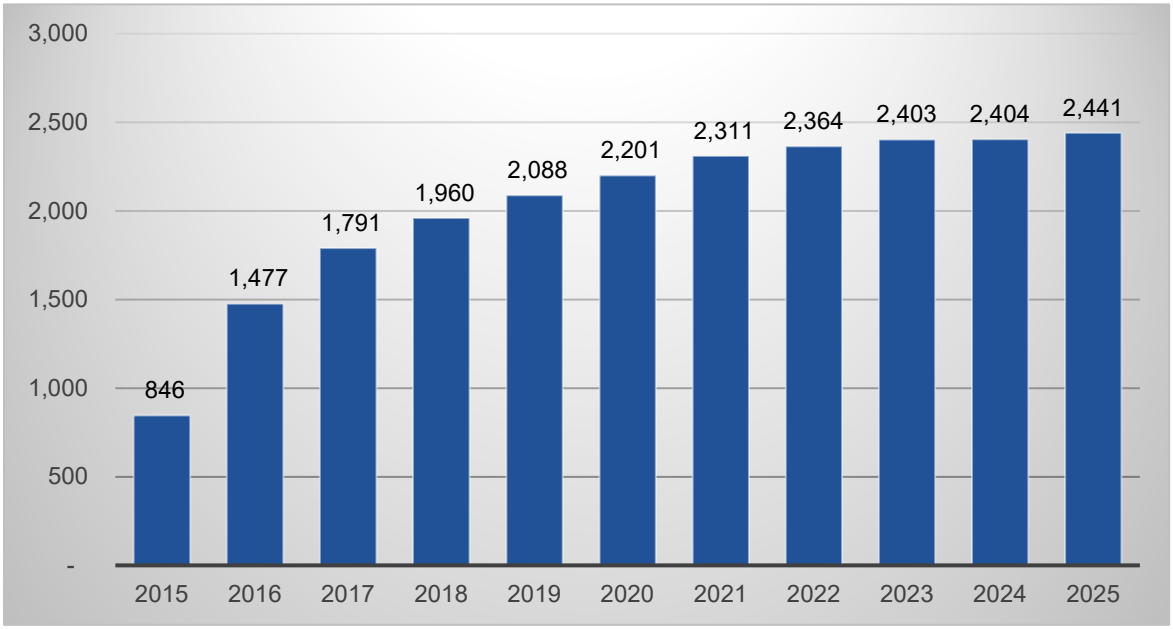
- Institutions participating in SARA reported 1,898,386 out-of-state EDEEs, 96.2% in SARA states and 3.8% in non-SARA states (California and the territories not participating in SARA). This compares to 96.0% in SARA states and 4.0% in non-SARA states in 2024. The proportion was approximately 90% SARA and 10% non-SARA from 2019 through 2021.
- The EDEE data reported for 2025 includes a 4.9% increase in total reported EDEE from Fall 204 to Fall 2025: from 4,442,246 students (2024) to 4,657,856 (2025). Total reported EDEE has remained above 4,000,000 students since 2020.
    - In Fall 2025, 1,722,640 students attended out-of-state institutions exclusively through distance education under SARA. This represents a 3.7% increase from the 1,661,689 EDEE reported in 2024.
    - Out-of-state EDEE comprised 40.8% (1,898,386) compared to 41.4% (1,839,560) of the reported EDEE for 2024.
    - The majority of EDEE at SARA-participating institutions have been in-state, comprising 59.2% (2,759,470) compared to 58.6% (2,602,686) for 2024.
- There were 546,869 OOLSP reported by participating institutions for the calendar year 2025. Reported OOSLP increased 12.9 % from the 484,478 reported in 2024. Reported OOSLP has continued to increase since 2021 after a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
- The CIP program area with the largest number of OOSLP was Health Professions and Related Programs (CIP #51), with 350,333 placements, representing 64.1% of all placements reported. Education (CIP #13) had the second highest number of placements with 42,680 placements, representing 7.8% of the total placements, followed by Business (CIP #52) with 22,769 placements, which accounted for 4.2% of reported placements. All other program area CIP codes combined accounted for 24.0% of reported learning placements.

Reporting Institutions

There was an increase of 37 reporting institutions – 1.5% – during the 2025 reporting period. Of the 2,441 complete responses received, 136 institutions (5.6%) reported no EDEE, and 709 institutions (29%) reported no OOSLP in 2025.

Figure 2 provides trend data over time on the number of participating institutions since data reporting was first required in 2015.

Figure 2. Number of Reporting Institutions 2015-2025

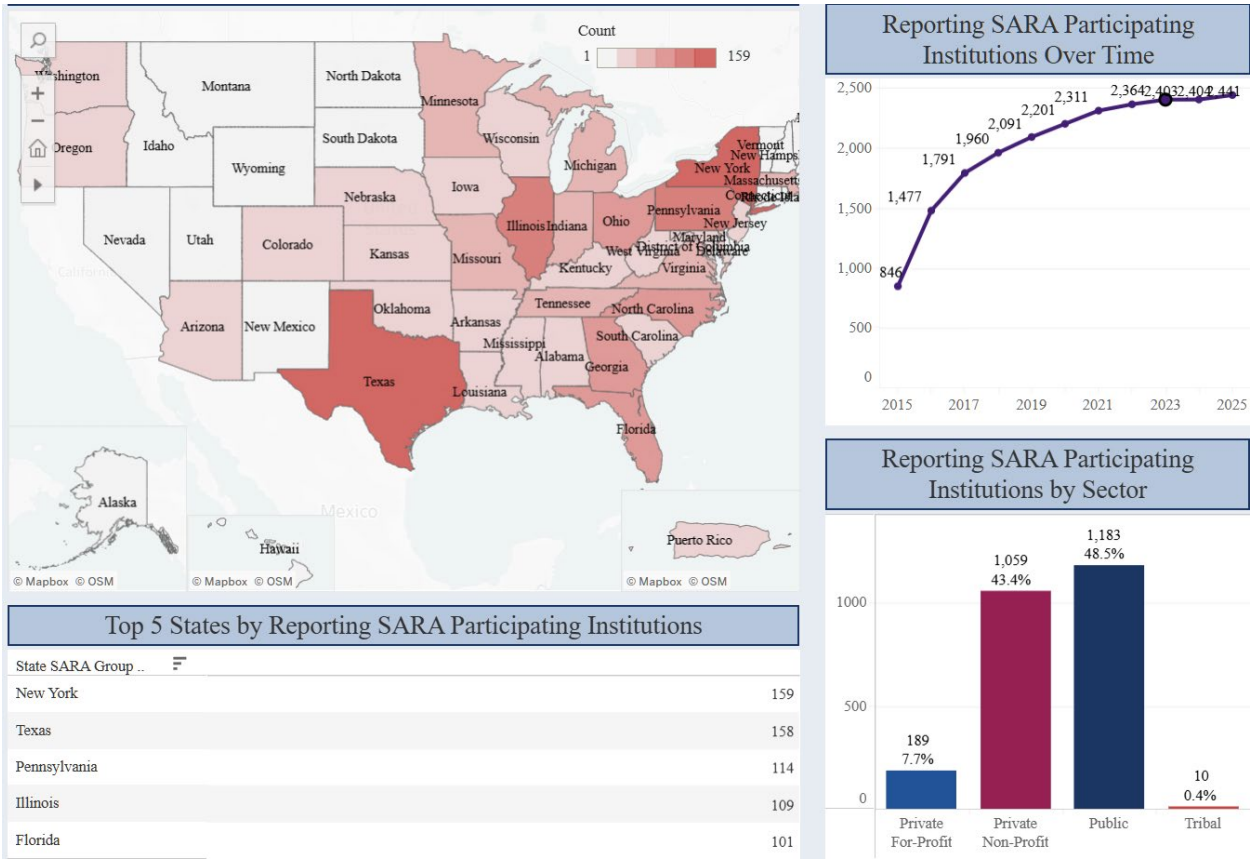


Reporting Institutions by State

The number of institutions participating in SARA varies greatly by state. New York has the most participating institutions with 159, followed by Texas with 158. The U.S. Virgin Islands currently has just one SARA-participating institution.

Figure 3 is a screenshot of SARA's online data dashboard for SARA-participating institutions. (SARA data dashboards are available on the website.) The data table in Figure 4 provides the number of participating institutions per state that submitted data during the 2025 data reporting period.

Figure 3. SARA Data Dashboard: Number of Participating Institutions



Top 5 States by Reporting SARA Participating Institutions

State SARA Group ..	
New York	159
Texas	158
Pennsylvania	114
Illinois	109
Florida	101

Figure 4. Reporting Institutions by State for 2025

State/Territory (A-M)	Total Reporting Institutions	State/Territory (N-Z)	Total Reporting Institutions
Alabama	46	Nebraska	28
Alaska	8	Nevada	10
Arizona	41	New Hampshire	17
Arkansas	39	New Jersey	50
Colorado	45	New Mexico	26
Connecticut	24	New York	159
Delaware	5	North Carolina	99
District of Columbia	15	North Dakota	15
Florida	101	Ohio	86
Georgia	90	Oklahoma	38
Hawaii	16	Oregon	32
Idaho	14	Pennsylvania	114
Illinois	109	Puerto Rico	30
Indiana	56	Rhode Island	12
Iowa	51	South Carolina	49
Kansas	47	South Dakota	17
Kentucky	50	Tennessee	67
Louisiana	38	Texas	158
Maine	23	US Virgin Islands	1
Maryland	42	Utah	19
Massachusetts	74	Vermont	12
Michigan	71	Virginia	77
Minnesota	64	Washington	46

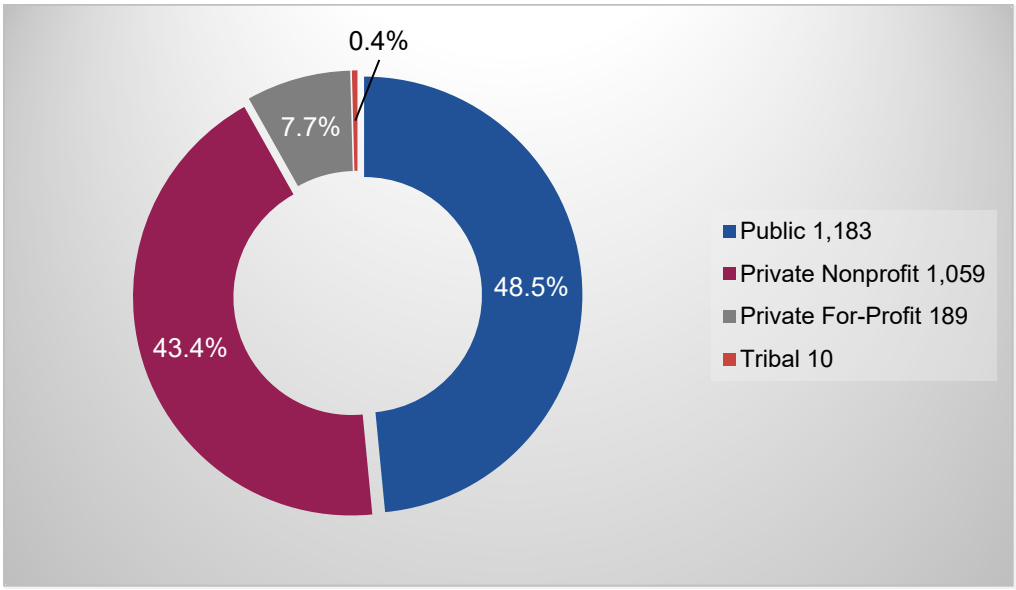
Mississippi	33	West Virginia	30
Missouri	75	Wisconsin	50
Montana	13	Wyoming	9

Reporting Institutions by Sector

- Public institutions represent 48.5% (1,183) of all institutions reporting SARA data;
- Private nonprofit institutions represent 43.4% (1059) of all institutions reporting SARA data;
- Private for-profit institutions represent 7.7% (189) of all institutions reporting SARA data.

In addition, ten tribal institutions reported to NC-SARA for 2025, representing 0.4% of the total. Figure 5 illustrates the sector percentages for the 2,441 reporting institutions.

Figure 5. Reporting Institutions by Sector for 2025

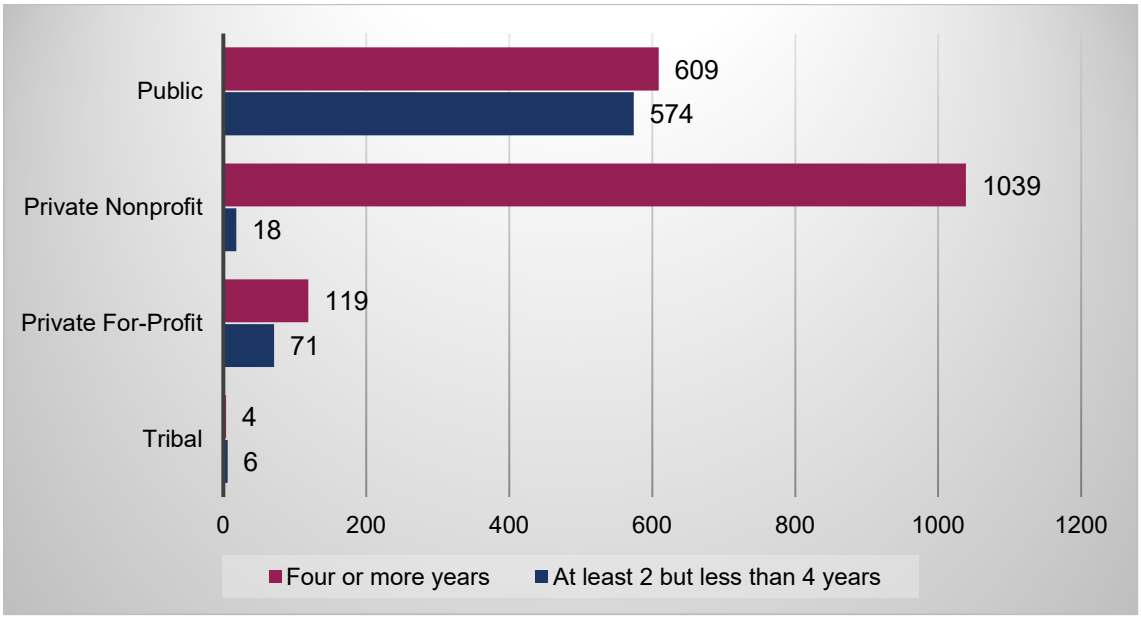


Reporting Institutions by Degree Level

An analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of SARA-participating institutions in each of two IPEDS degree level categories: those that offer programs typically lasting *At least 2 but less than 4 years* and those whose programs typically last *Four or more years*. Based on the most recent IPEDS data available, 27.4% (669) of participating institutions were categorized as *At least 2 but less than 4 years*, and 72.6% (1,772) were categorized as *Four or more years*. For those SARA-participating institutions that do not participate in IPEDS, degree level was determined by conducting an internet search of their program offerings.

Further analysis reveals that nearly half (48.5%) of public institutions participating in SARA are categorized by IPEDS as *At least 2 but less than 4 years*. The majority (98.3%) of private nonprofit institutions are categorized as *Four or more years*; nearly two thirds (62.6%) of private for-profit institutions are categorized as *Four or more years*. Figure 6 illustrates the IPEDS degree levels of SARA-participating institutions in 2025.

Figure 6. Reporting Institutions' IPEDS Degree Levels for 2025



Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment

Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment (EDEE) reporting has been a mandatory requirement for institutions participating in SARA since 2015. This section of the *SARA Annual Data Technical Report* focuses on reported EDEE.

Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment is Based on IPEDS

SARA EDEE reporting requirements are based on the institutions' EF reporting to IPEDS each fall. SARA-participating institutions report student enrollment exclusively in distance education courses disaggregated by state, territory, or district where the learning takes place. Detailed descriptions of the IPEDS' definitions and how SARA EDEE reporting differs from IPEDS reporting can be found in *Appendix A: Technical Notes*.

Because IPEDS' EF reporting captures only the fall term, it represents less than half of all EDEE at most institutions. Therefore, the reported EDEE is not representative of annual distance education activity, though it is the industry standard.

Total Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Reported

There was a 4.9% increase in reported EDEE from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025: from 4,442,246 students (2024) to 4,657,856 (2025). This increase follows a 5.0% increase from 2023 to 2024. Total reported EDEE has remained above 4,000,000 students since 2020. SARA data are a first look at the EDEE reported for Fall 2025, as the U.S. Department of Education generally publishes the full IPEDS Distance Education data set in December of the following year.

Total reported EDEE for 2019 through 2025 are displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Total Reported EDEE 2019-2025

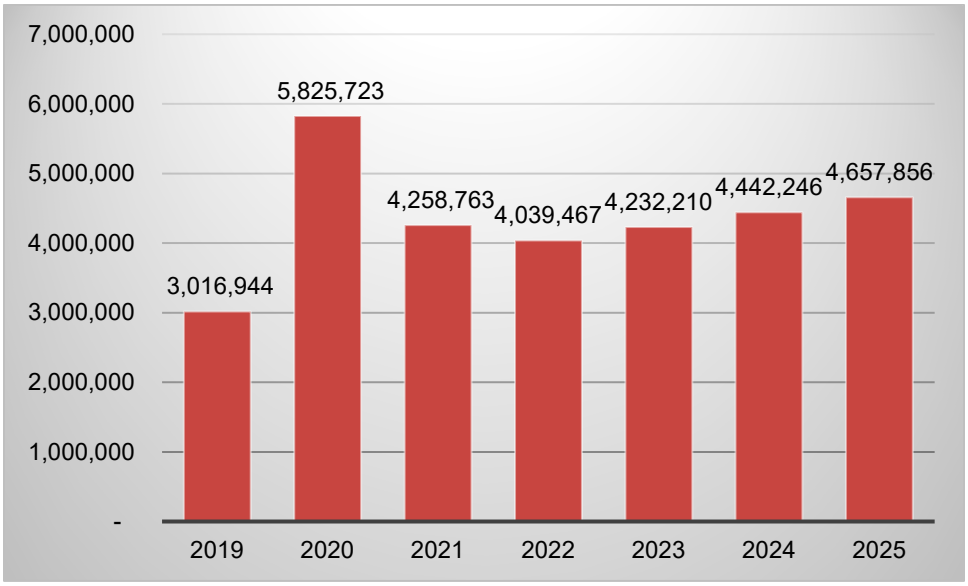
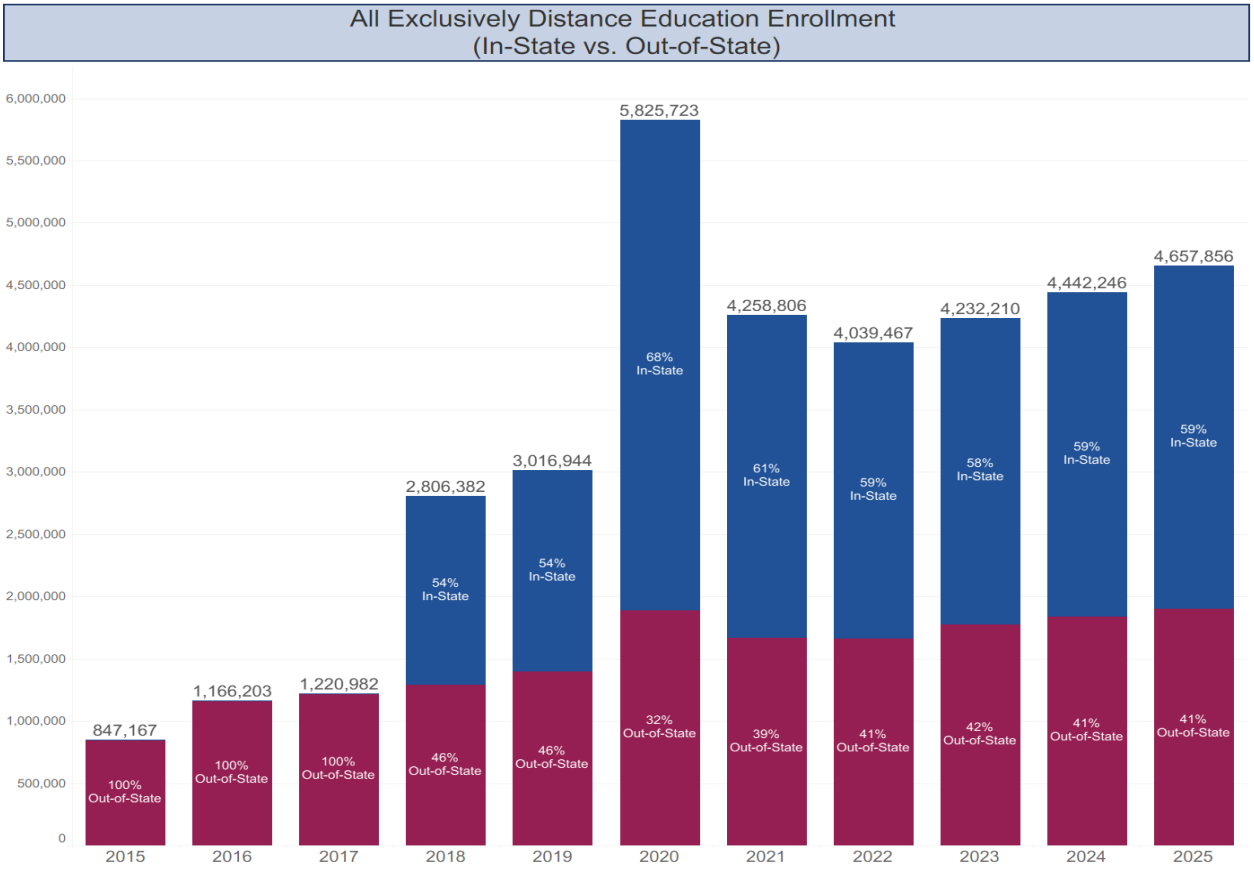


Figure 8 displays the reported EDEE for 2019-2025, including the proportion of in-state and out-of-state reported EDEE. (It's important to note that SARA policy first began requiring the

reporting of in-state EDEE in 2018.) The majority of EDEE at SARA-participating institutions are still in-state. In-state EDEE comprised 2,759,470 (59.2%) of reported enrollment, while out-of-state EDEE have remained consistent since 2020, when there was a large increase in in-state EDEE due to the COVID-019 pandemic.

Figure 8. Reported In-State & Out-of-State EDEE 2015-2025



Total Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Reported by Sector

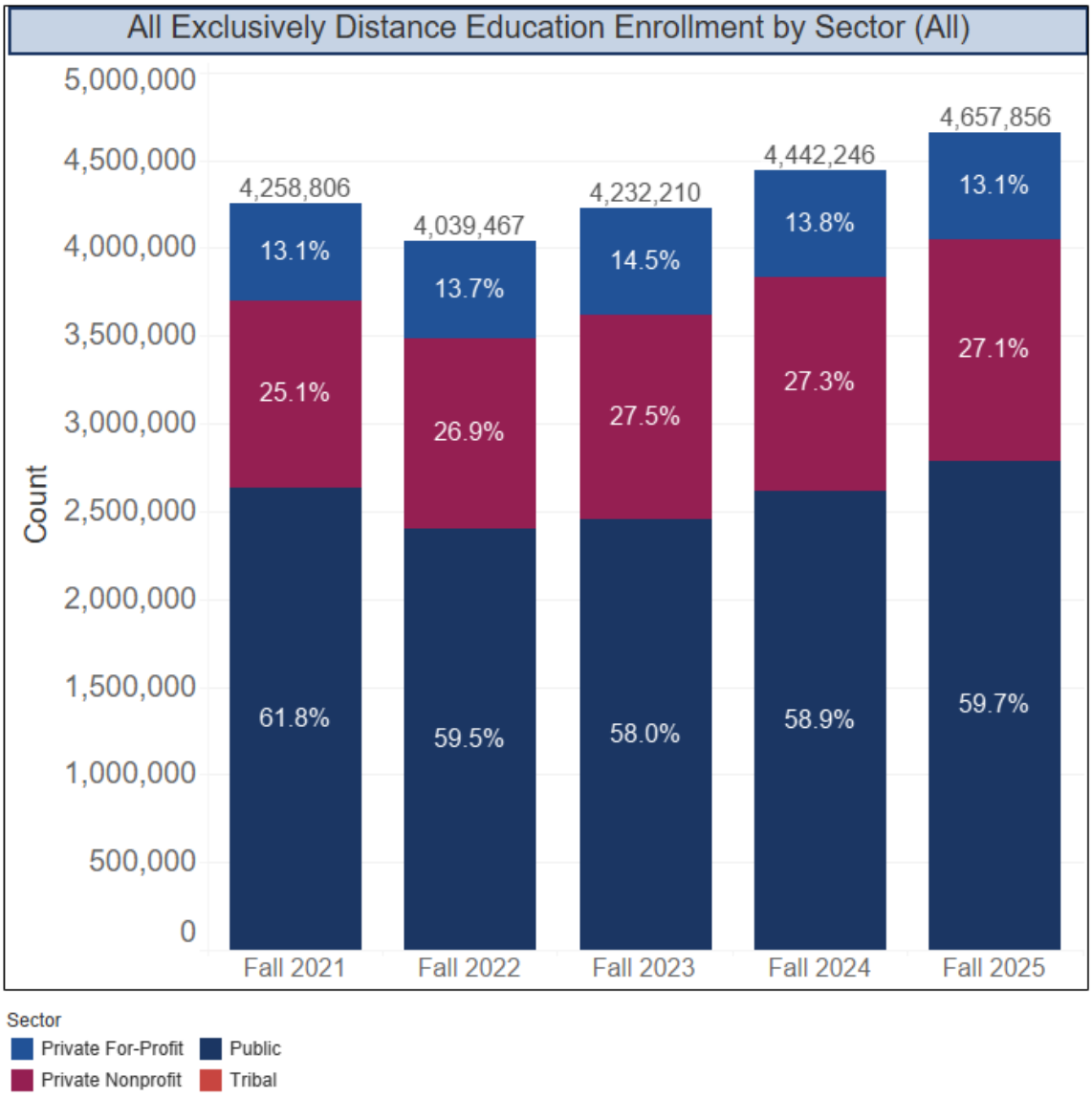
Analysis of EDEE reported for 2025 by institutional sector reveals a slight increase in the proportion represented by public institutions from 2024.

- Public institutions represented 59.7% (2,781,123) in 2025 compared to 58.9% (2,608,959) in 2024.
- Private nonprofit institutions represented 27.2% (1,265,907) of total reported EDEE in 2025 compared to 27.3% (1,213,516) in 2024.
- Private for-profit institutions represented 13.0% (607,931) of total reported EDEE in 2025, compared to 13.6% (602,418) in 2024.
- Tribal institutions represented 2,895 (0.1%) of total reported EDEE in 2025 compared to 2,938 (0.1%) of total reported EDEE in 2024. Three new Tribal institutions were added in 2025.

Total Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Reported by Sector Over Time

An evaluation of reported EDEE by sector over time reveals that private for-profits have increased from 12.9% in 2021 to 13.1% in 2025 as a proportion of total reported EDEE. At the same time, private nonprofits have also increased, from 25.2% to 27.2%. Public institutions have seen a decline from 61.8% of all reported EDEE in 2021 to 59.7% in 2025. Figure 9 shows these data by sector over time, beginning with pre-pandemic data in 2018.

Figure 9. Total Reported EDEE by Sector 2018-2025 (including in-state enrollment)



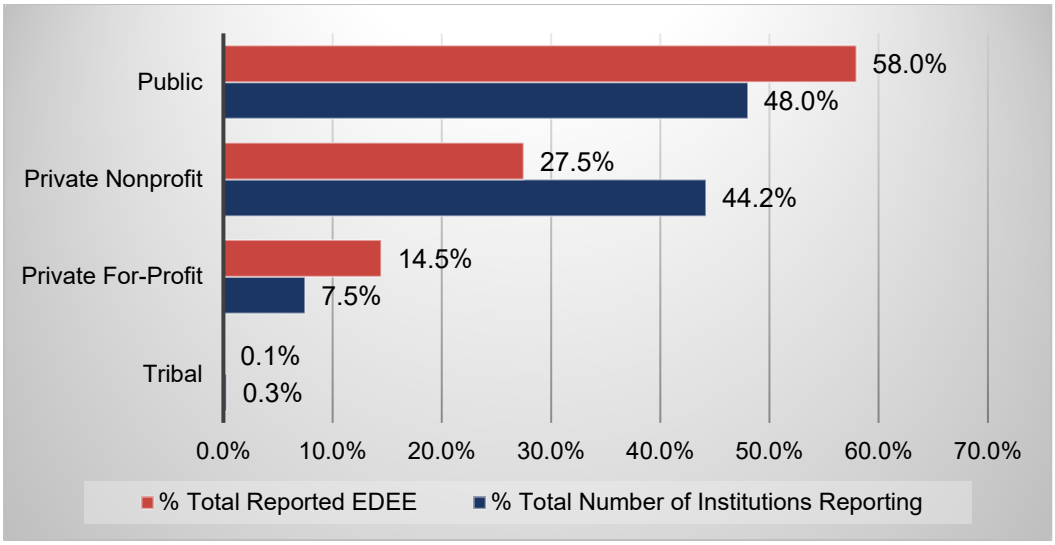
Reported Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment vs. Number of Institutions by Sector

The shift in the proportion of reported EDEE by sector is important to understand in the context of the associated proportion of SARA-participating institutions by sector. Historic analysis[2] of reported EDEE by sector has revealed that public institutions represent the majority of participating institutions as well as the majority of reported EDEE.

- Public institutions represented nearly half (48.5%) of institutions and 59.7% of reported EDEE in 2025.
- Private nonprofits represented 43.4% of reporting institutions and 27.2% of EDEE reported in 2025.
- Private for-profit institutions represented 7.7% of institutions and 13.1% of reported EDEE in 2025.
- Tribal institutions represented 0.4% of institutions and 0.0% of reported EDEE in 2025.

Figure 10 shows the proportion of reported EDEE and the proportion of institutions by sector reported in 2025.

Figure 10. Reporting Institutions and EDEE (including in-state enrollment) by Sector for 2025



[2] *NC-SARA Data Report: Fall 2019 Distance Education Enrollments & 2019 Out-of-State Learning Placements*, p.31-32. https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-10/NC-SARA_2020_Data_Report_PUBLISH_19Oct21.pdf (Retrieved 6/02/2026 .)

Out-of-State Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment by Sector

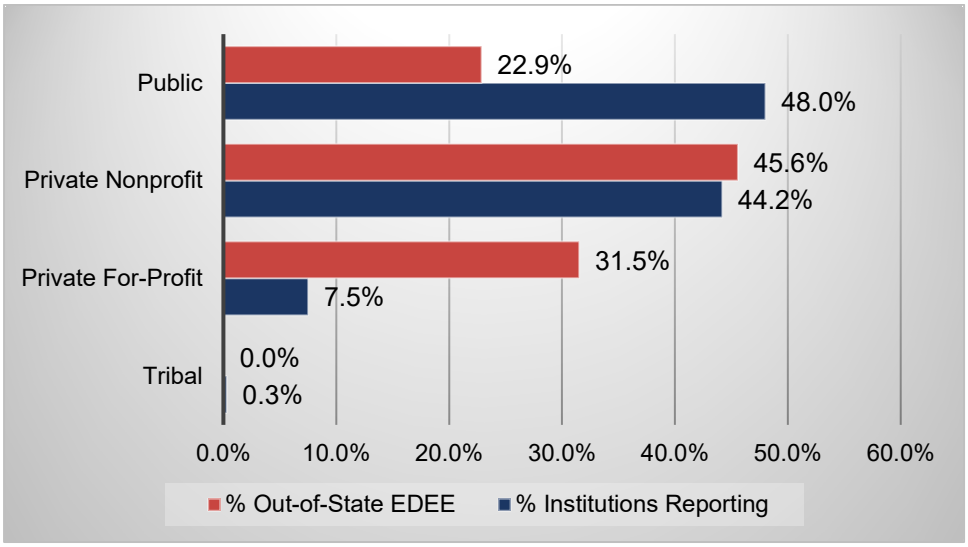
Because SARA was created to facilitate distance education across state lines, another measure of distance education activity that NC-SARA has been collecting since 2015 is **out-of-state** EDEE.

In 2025 there were 1,898,386 out-of-state EDEE at SARA-participating institutions.

- Public institutions represented 24.4% of reported out-of-state EDEE (463,095);
- Private nonprofit institutions continued to represent the largest proportion of out-of-state EDEE with 46.5% of the total (883,406);
- Private for-profit institutions represented 29.0% of reported out-of-state EDEE (551,115);
- Tribal institutions represented less than one-tenth of a percent of out-of-state EDEE (770).

The proportions remain consistent by sector over time, indicating that in accordance with their mission, public institutions are more likely to enroll in-state students exclusively via distance education, while private nonprofits are more likely to enroll out-of-state students. The sector enrollment percentages and proportion of reported enrollment by sector for 2025 are presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Reporting Institutions and Out-of-State EDEE by Sector for 2025



Analysis of EDEE by sector is important to understand the complete picture of distance education activity among SARA-participating institutions. These data reveal considerable variation among the sectors when comparing in-state and out-of-state EDEE.

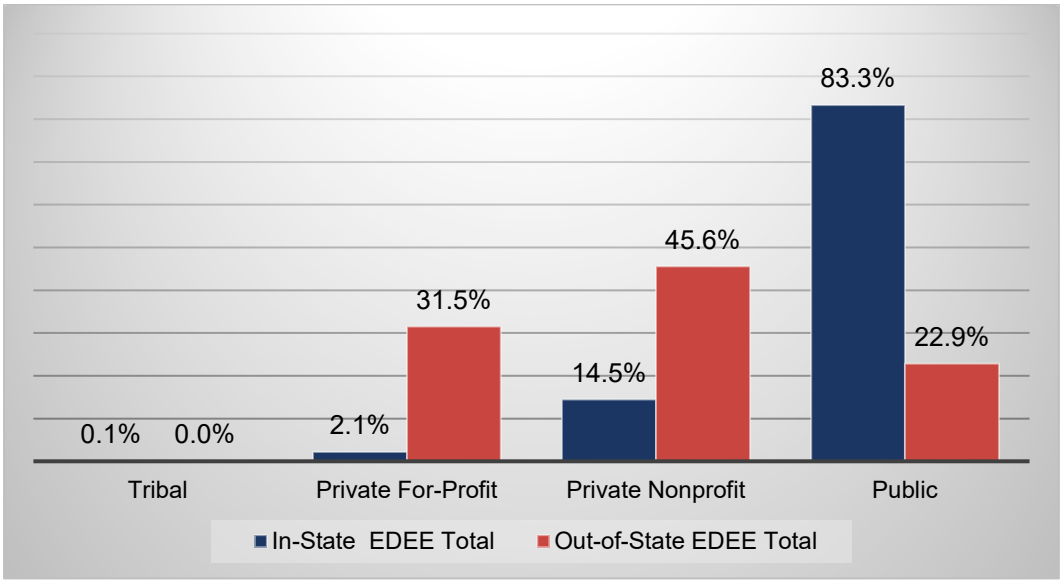
- **In-State:** Public institutions represented 84% of reported in-state EDEE in 2025, compared to 83.6% in 2024. Historically, public institutions have far exceeded the other sectors in reported in-state exclusively distance education enrollment.[3]

[3] *NC-SARA Annual Data Report: Technical Report for Fall 2021 Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment & 2021 Out-of-State Learning Placements*, p.20.

- **Out-of-State:** Consistent with prior years' reporting, out-of-state EDEE for 2025 is led by the private nonprofit sector with 46.5% (46.2% in 2024), while private for-profits reported 29.0% of out-of-state EDEE in 2025 (29.9% in 2023).

Figure 12 displays the reported EDEE sector data for 2025.

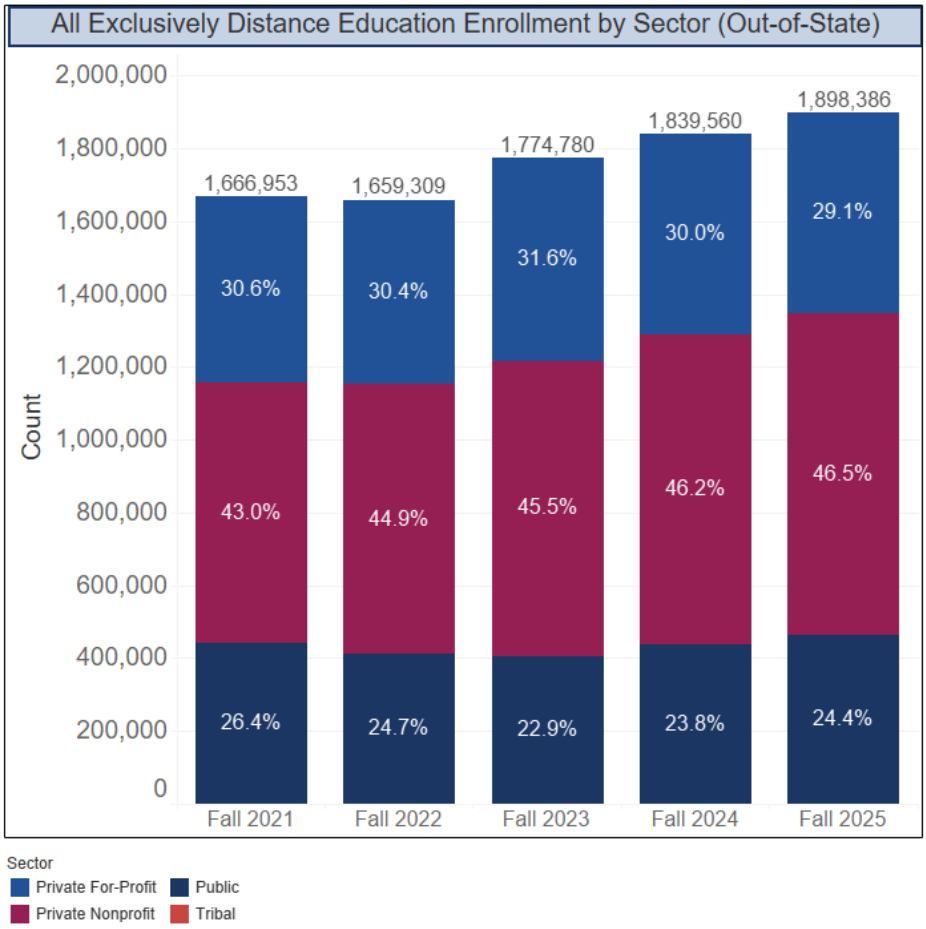
Figure 12. Reported Out-of-State & In-State EDEE by Sector for 2025



Trend analysis of out-of-state EDEE reveals fairly consistent results by sector over time. Figure 13 shows these data from 2018 through 2025.

https://ncsara.org/sites/default/files/files/2022-10/2021_Technical_Data_Report_10-2022.pdf (Retrieved 6/02/2026.)

Figure 13 Reported EDEE by Sector 2019-2025 (Out-of-State only)



State Summary of Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment Data

Institutions participating in SARA report their EDEE by state for each state outside of their own physical location. The state level EDEE data reported by SARA-participating institutions are available in the Data Dashboards on the NC-SARA website.

The state level data does not include in-state EDEE. Although in-state EDEE and total EDEE data are important for broader considerations, the focus of SARA is distance education activity **across** state lines and therefore this report primarily addresses out-of-state EDEE.

Figure 15 provides each state's:

- State level SARA EDEE (out-of-state EDEE, taking place in SARA states).
- State-level non-SARA EDEE (out-of-state EDEE, taking place in non-SARA states).
- Total reported state-level EDEE.
- Total reported EDEE in the state by other SARA-participating institutions.

Total state level data are available in the Data Dashboards on the NC-SARA website.

Figure 14. Reported State Level EDEE for 2025 (out-of-state only)

State/District/ Territory	Reported EDEE in Other SARA States/Territory	Reported EDEE in Non-SARA States/Territory	Total Reported EDEE	EDEE in the State Reported by Other SARA Institutions
Alabama	32,216	2,097	33,643	31,546
Alaska	6,887	284	1,926	1,642
Arizona	26,561	51,160	371,954	320,794
Arkansas	18,288	492	12,881	12,389
Colorado	35,967	6,561	77,829	71,268
Connecticut	20,962	936	19,115	18,179
Delaware	7,388	322	7,157	6,835
District of Columbia	5,863	1,387	42,506	41,119
Florida	129,944	5,675	63,259	57,584
Georgia	101,559	5,092	32,117	27,025
Hawaii	10,250	1,214	3,341	2,127
Idaho	12,073	1,931	15,097	13,166
Illinois	68,903	3,127	44,483	41,356
Indiana	32,414	6,111	84,229	78,118
Iowa	14,152	564	12,710	12,146
Kansas	14,837	600	11,508	10,908
Kentucky	24,343	1,179	29,103	27,924
Louisiana	29,707	1,426	18,559	17,133
Maine	6,255	1,079	15,492	14,413
Maryland	43,417	4,323	45,412	41,089
Massachusetts	27,825	2,699	23,486	20,787
Michigan	44,279	732	9,128	8,396
Minnesota	22,382	3,679	64,386	60,707
Mississippi	21,342	262	6,422	6,160
Missouri	35,130	1,837	26,845	25,008
Montana	6,918	226	1,657	1,431
Nebraska	8,357	915	15,064	14,149
Nevada	25,871	667	1,480	813
New Hampshire	6,337	12,831	191,319	178,488
New Jersey	49,988	770	9,342	8,572
New Mexico	11,631	590	5,808	5,218
New York	76,516	2,219	30,603	28,384
North Carolina	78,193	427	9,218	8,791
North Dakota	5,312	376	5,862	5,486
Ohio	62,671	2,348	29,751	27,403

State/District/ Territory	Reported EDEE in Other SARA States/Territory	Reported EDEE in Non-SARA States/Territory	Total Reported EDEE	EDEE in the State Reported by Other SARA Institutions
Oklahoma	24,254	501	8,938	8,437
Oregon	18,875	4,233	15,759	11,526
Pennsylvania	65,783	3,275	37,042	33,767
Puerto Rico	7,350	118	10,077	9,959
Rhode Island	6,457	190	4,077	3,887
South Carolina	44,714	306	5,727	5,421
South Dakota	4,689	327	4,059	3,732
Tennessee	49,190	454	18,460	18,006
Texas	193,639	3,097	22,866	19,769
U.S. Virgin Islands	689		8	8
Utah	17,437	27,187	228,472	201,285
Vermont	3,111	227	2,987	2,760
Virginia	66,801	4,689	98,156	93,467
Washington	56,667	769	4,764	3,995
West Virginia	10,790	3,602	48,830	45,228
Wisconsin	22,376	565	13,864	13,299
Wyoming	5,080	68	1,608	1,540
Totals	**1,722,640**	**175,746**	**1,898,386**	**1,722,640**

Top Ten Institutions by Size of Reported Exclusively Distance Education Enrollment

For 2025, the institutions that reported the largest EDEE are Western Governors University, Southern New Hampshire University, and University of Phoenix. These were the top three institutions based on reported EDEE in 2019 through 2022 as well.

The complete list of SARA-participating institutions, including the ability to filter by sector, is available on the NC-SARA website using the SARA Dashboards.

The ten institutions reporting the largest EDEE in 2025 are shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Top Ten Institutions by Size of Total Reported EDEE for 2025

Institution Name	State	Sector	Reported EDEE in SARA States	Reported EDEE in Non-SARA States	Total Reported EDEE
Western Governors University	Utah	Private Nonprofit	204,046	19,944	223,990
Southern New Hampshire University	New Hampshire	Private Nonprofit	183,410	12,730	196,140
University of Phoenix	Arizona	Private For-Profit	93,820	12,174	105,994
Liberty University	Virginia	Private Nonprofit	87,626	3,555	91,181
Grand Canyon University	Arizona	Private Nonprofit	77,303	12,083	89,386
Arizona State University	Arizona	Public	67,797	14,559	82,356
Penn Foster College	Arizona	Private For-Profit	73,932	4,064	77,996
University of Maryland Global Campus	Maryland	Public	56,406	2,564	58,970
Capella University	Minnesota	Private For-Profit	46,205	3,006	49,211
Purdue University Global	Indiana	Public	44,203	3,529	47,732

Out-of-State Learning Placements

NC-SARA's annual data reporting began requiring the reporting of out-of-state learning placements (OOSLP) in 2019 for OOSLP that took place in calendar year 2018. Details regarding the history of reported SARA OOSLP can be found in *Appendix B: Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP)* of this report. This section of the *SARA Annual Data Technical Report* focuses on reported OOSLP.

Some institutions participate in SARA so that they may offer OOSLP to their students, with no intention of offering courses or programs exclusively through distance education.

Out-of-State Learning Placements Defined

Out-of-state learning placements are **on-ground, out-of-state experiential learning activities**. They include clinical rotations, student teaching, internships, and other similar activities, many of which are related to workforce development needs. They are also often required as part of obtaining a degree and/or license to practice in a particular profession. SARA policy allows reciprocity for certain OOSLP.

It is important to note that reporting includes on-ground students as well as distance education students' in-person OOSLP. Institutions do not report virtual learning placements to NC-SARA.

NC-SARA uses the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) system to categorize and report OOSLP and requires reporting by the two-digit CIP code only. Those unfamiliar with CIP codes may refer to the CIP website directly[4] or Appendix B of this report for more information.

Criteria for Inclusion in Out-of-State Learning Placement Reporting

Institutions reported out-of-state learning placements that met the following criteria:

1. The placement started between January 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025.
2. The placement is outside the home state of the SARA institution.
3. The placement involves the physical presence of the student at the out-of-state location(s).
4. One or more of the following is true:
    a. The placement is an activity required for degree completion.
    b. The placement is an activity required for professional licensure.
    c. The placement is offered for credit.
    d. The placement is offered for a fee.

Placements that meet the above criteria should be reported as follows:

- Disaggregate by two-digit CIP code;
- Disaggregate by the state in which the placement was made.

Total Out-of-State Learning Placements Reported

There were 546,869 OOLSP reported by participating institutions for the calendar year 2025, an increase of about 15.5% from the 473,548 reported in 2024. Reported OOSLP numbers have continued to increase since 2021 after a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

[4] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Classification of Instructional Programs*, https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/default.aspx?y=56 (Retrieved 06/02/2026.)

Institutions were asked to report each placement a student participated in, even if the placement was in the same state and program area, whereas previously institutions may have reported only one placement in this scenario.

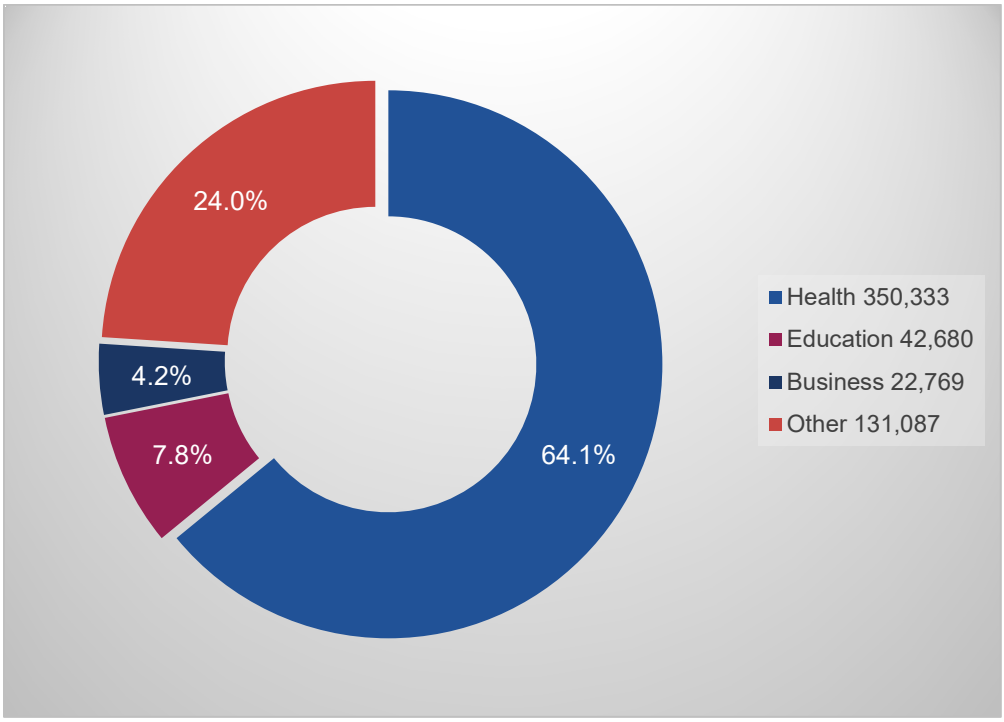
There were 709 institutions (29.0%) that reported no OOSLP in 2025. This is a decline from 713 institutions (29.7%) that reported no OOSLP in 2024 and 766 institutions (31.9%) that reported zero OOSLP in 2023. The continued decline in reporting zero OOSLP suggests that institutional staff are getting better at tracking and reporting OOSLP since SARA policy began requiring this reporting in 2018.

Reported CIP Code Program Areas

The CIP code program area with the largest number of OOSLP was Health Professions and Related Programs (CIP #51), with 350,333 placements, representing 64.1% of all placements reported. Education (CIP #13) had the second highest number of placements with 42,680 placements, representing 7.8% of the total placements, followed by Business (CIP #52) with 22,769 placements, which accounted for 4.2% of reported placements. All other program area CIP codes combined accounted for 24.0% of reported learning placements. Figure 18 provides a graphic representation of the OOSLP data reported for 2025.

The proportion of reported OOSLP across CIP program areas remained consistent between 2022 and 2025.

Figure 16. OOSLP Reported by CIP Code Program Area for 2025



State Summary of Out-of-State Learning Placement Data

Because SARA stakeholders are often interested in the flow of students across state lines, the table in Figure 19 reports outgoing and incoming OOSLP for each member state. Incoming OOSLP counts include students placed in non-SARA member states by SARA-participating institutions.

Figure 17. State Summary of OOSLP Data for 2025

State/Territory	Outgoing OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent FROM Institutions in State)	Incoming OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent TO State from Institutions in Other SARA States)
Alabama	9,068	7,312
Alaska	729	2,113
Arizona	34,063	16,898
Arkansas	4,782	3,874
Colorado	7,923	11,491
Connecticut	4,234	7,135
Delaware	1,603	5,245
District of Columbia	5,366	6,308
Florida	17,407	49,795
Georgia	6,627	28,333
Hawaii	1,579	1,845
Idaho	5,495	4,544
Illinois	17,006	19,699
Indiana	33,916	8,801
Iowa	6,769	4,727
Kansas	6,179	5,139
Kentucky	16,746	9,547
Louisiana	3,681	7,926
Maine	4,300	2,849
Maryland	6,565	13,057
Massachusetts	16,214	10,531
Michigan	6,797	12,000
Minnesota	19,698	11,926
Mississippi	3,697	4,846
Missouri	23,125	12,266
Montana	569	2,519
Nebraska	7,365	2,874
Nevada	715	8,126
New Hampshire	7,358	3,762
New Jersey	2,964	19,845
New Mexico	4,235	2,563
New York	17,739	24,409
North Carolina	5,600	20,785
North Dakota	2,352	3,099

State/Territory	Outgoing OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent FROM Institutions in State)	Incoming OOSLP (Reported OOSLP Sent TO State from Institutions in Other SARA States)
Ohio	19,249	17,060
Oklahoma	2,154	4,238
Oregon	3,032	5,876
Pennsylvania	40,080	15,725
Puerto Rico	1,383	1,783
Rhode Island	3,202	2,496
South Carolina	5,328	16,171
South Dakota	1,876	2,105
Tennessee	36,484	11,635
Texas	11,676	31,337
U.S. Virgin Islands	28	105
Utah	33,728	5,787
Vermont	1,485	1,687
Virginia	42,126	12,268
Washington	4,612	12,330
West Virginia	5,682	3,169
Wisconsin	21,633	7,373
Wyoming	645	2,064
Total SARA States	**546,869**	
Total Non-SARA States/Territories	**37,471**	
Total OOSLP Reported	**546,869**	**546,869**

Top Ten Institutions by Size of Reported Outgoing OOSLP

In addition to the state summary data, OOSLP are reported at the institution level by NC-SARA. For 2025, the institutions that reported the most outgoing OOSLP were South College, Western Governors University, and Purdue University. The reported OOSLP data for the complete list of SARA-participating institutions is available in the Data Dashboards. The ten institutions reporting the largest number of OOSLP from 2025 to NC-SARA are listed in Figure 20.

Figure 18. Top 10 Institutions by Size of Reported Outgoing OOSLP for 20252025

Institution Name	State	Sector	Reported Outgoing OOSLP
South College	TN	Private For-Profit	19,869
Western Governors University	UT	Private Nonprofit	18,992
Purdue University	IN	Public	15,468
Herzing University	WI	Private Nonprofit	14,706
ECPI University	VI	Private For-Profit	12,853
Grand Canyon University	AZ	Private Nonprofit	12,675
Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine	PA	Private Nonprofit	12,293
Liberty University	VI	Private Nonprofit	10,734
Nightingale College	UT	Private For-Profit	10,541
Arizona College of Nursing	AZ	Private For-Profit	10,497

Conclusion

NC-SARA staff acknowledge and thank the staff at SARA-participating institutions for their efforts to accurately collect and report EDEE and OOSLP data for 2025. We also thank our State Portal Entity (SPE) and regional education compact partners who assist in the data collection effort annually by providing additional communication and follow-up with institutions that have questions about data reporting.

Continuous improvement in the reporting system and process is a priority for NC-SARA, who work with the Data Advisory Committee, the Institution Advisory Committee, and other stakeholders to develop and implement improvements in the systems, processes, and communications about data reporting. The hard work of everyone involved is contributing to improvement in all aspects of SARA data reporting.

NC-SARA continues to improve not only the data collection process but also the transparency of and access to the SARA data collected annually. The Data Dashboards debuted in 2020, and in 2021, institution-level OOSLP data were included in the dashboards for the first time. It is our sincere hope that institutional staff and other stakeholders find ways to use the SARA data to inform their own distance education strategies to better meet the needs of the students they serve. Incremental improvements in the forms and supporting materials will be made for next year.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Technical Notes

IPEDS Distance Education Definitions

The following definitions are provided by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)[5].

> **Distance Education** – Education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies used for instruction may include the following: Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcasts, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; audio conferencing; and video cassette, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassette, DVDs, and CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with the technologies listed above.
>
> **Distance Education Course** – A course in which the instructional content is delivered exclusively via distance education. Requirements for coming to campus for orientation, testing, or academic support services do not exclude a course from being classified as distance education.
>
> **Distance Education Program** – A program for which all the required coursework for program completion is able to be completed via distance education courses.

NC-SARA Uses IPEDS Definitions

NC-SARA relies on the existing definitions and reporting schedules required by the federal government's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Using these existing structures and processes, which are likely familiar to institutional staff, is part of NC-SARA's commitment to not creating an undue additional reporting burden for participating institutions. IPEDS data collection is managed by the U.S. Department of Education through the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and reporting is required of all institutions of higher education that offer federal financial aid in the U.S. states and territories. NCES has been requiring institutions to report distance education data since the IPEDS Fall Enrollment (EF) reporting in 2012. These data are the basis of institutional exclusively distance education enrollment reporting to NC-SARA.

IPEDS Distance Education Reporting

IPEDS defines a distance education course as "a course in which the instructional content is delivered exclusively via distance education. Requirements for coming to campus for orientation, testing, or academic support services do not exclude a course from being classified as distance education."[6] The definition also includes detail regarding delivery modality. NC-

[5] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *IPEDS Glossary for 2026-27 Data Collection System* https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Downloads/Forms/IPEDSGlossary.pdf, (Retrieved 9/03/2026.)

[6] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *IPEDS Glossary for 2026-27 Data Collection System* https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Downloads/Forms/IPEDSGlossary.pdf, (Retrieved 9/03/2026.)

SARA uses the IPEDS definition of distance education. Using the IPEDS definition and data is meant to lessen the reporting burden for participating institutions, since most are already reporting to IPEDS.

Importantly, IPEDS distance education reporting requires enrollment data in four categories. These categories are listed below:

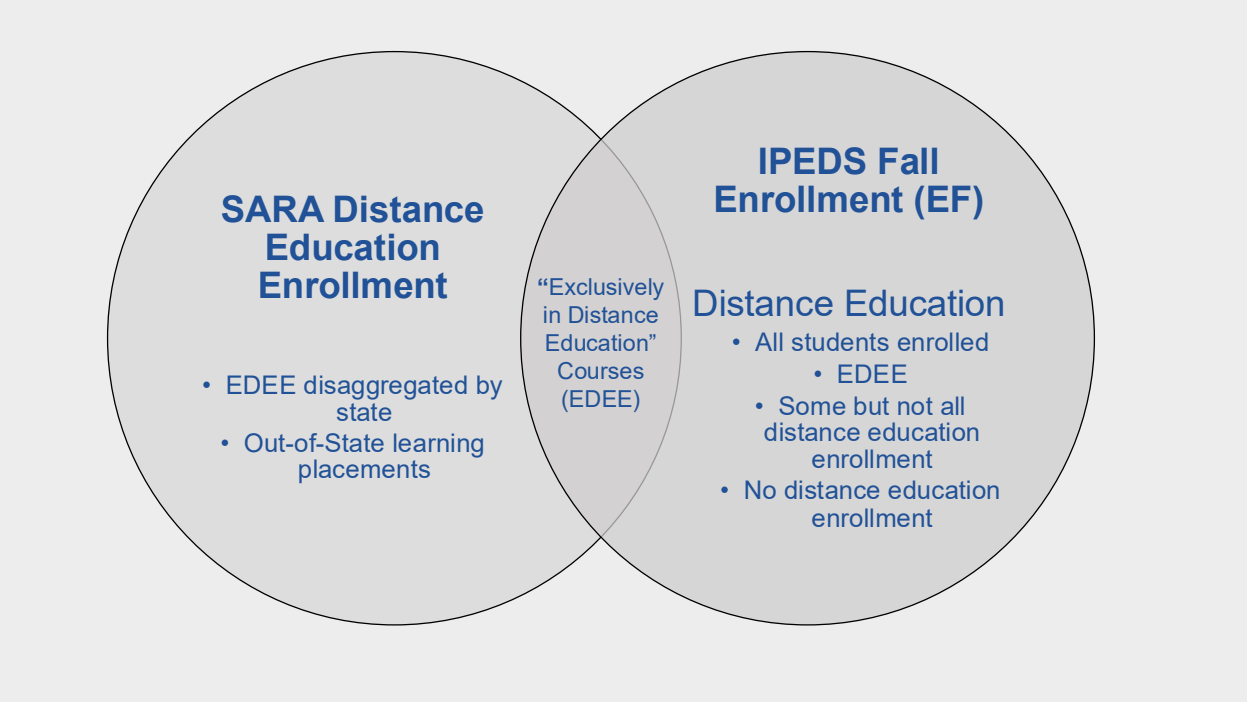
- All students enrolled
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses
- Students enrolled in some but not all distance education courses
- Students not enrolled in any distance education courses

In addition to these fields, the data provided for students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses is disaggregated by where the students are located. These five IPEDS categories include:

- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and are located in the same state/jurisdiction as institution
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and are located in U.S. not in the same state/jurisdiction as institution
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and are located in U.S. state/jurisdiction unknown
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and are located outside U.S.
- Students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses and location of student unknown/not reported

SARA distance education enrollment reporting includes only students enrolled exclusively in distance education courses. NC-SARA requests that institutions disaggregate the EDEE data reported to IPEDS by state for purposes of SARA annual distance education enrollment reporting. For the purposes of this report, the term “distance education” is used synonymously with the IPEDS phrase “exclusively in distance education”. Figure 21 shows the distance education enrollment data reported to IPEDS and to NC-SARA.

Figure 19. Reporting Requirements of SARA and IPEDS EF



SARA Policy Requires Out-of-State Learning Placement (OOSLP) Reporting

Enrollment captured and reported under the SARA exclusively distance education reporting provisions did not include on-the-ground, out-of-state learning placements (e.g., clinical rotations, student teaching, internships, etc.) until 2018. Learning placement activities are an important part of many academic programs, and the number and extent of such placements are of great interest and concern to educators, practitioners, licensing bodies, and state regulators. Therefore, it was agreed during the formation of SARA, that after successfully creating the process for reporting exclusively distance education enrollments, NC-SARA would create a similar process for collecting and reporting out-of-state learning placements (OOSLP).

Unlike exclusively distance education enrollment (EDEE) reporting, which is also captured through IPEDS, there is no existing mechanism for gathering and reporting OOSLP data.

SARA does not currently require reporting of virtual learning placements.

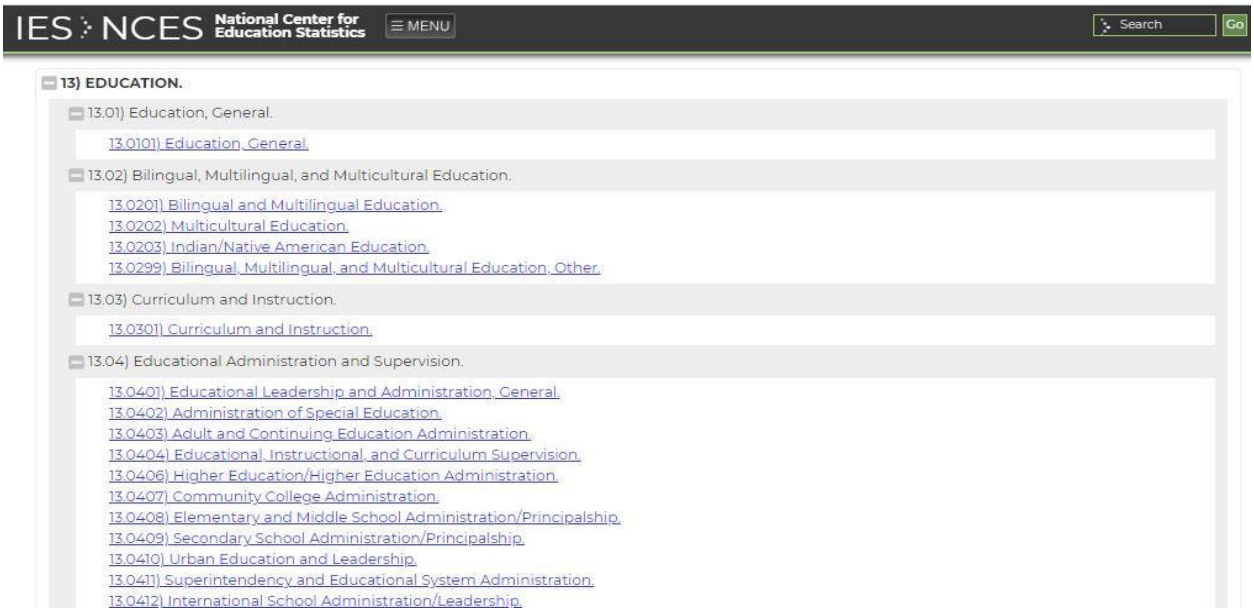
Appendix B. Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP)

One fundamental characteristic of SARA is its reliance on certain previously existing, workable mechanisms (such as accreditation, federal financial responsibility composite scores, etc.), rather than inventing similar mechanisms anew. Because it is used by almost all U.S. institutions of higher education, NC-SARA is using the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) system to categorize and report OOSLP data.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) provides a taxonomic scheme that supports the accurate tracking and reporting of fields of study and program completion activity[7]. Developed by NCES in 1980, the CIP system has been revised five times, most recently in 2019 for use in 2020. The 2020 CIP codes have been used for reporting to NC-SARA beginning with the 2020 OOSLP reporting in the spring of 2021.

The highest order of the taxonomy has 47 two-digit CIP codes that represent program areas. Each program area code may be further subdivided, resulting in either two digits (xx), four digits (xx.xx), or six digits (xx.xxxx). Figure 22 is a screenshot that illustrates the initial portion of the CIP code for program area Education[8].

Figure 20. CIP Code Example for Education (CIP #13.0)



Institutions have already assigned CIP codes to their academic programs, and NC-SARA does not expect or request that institutions revisit those decisions for the purpose of SARA reporting. Rather, SARA-participating institutions are to report learning placements categorized by the codes already assigned to the related programs.

[7] Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP 2020). (n.d.) Retrieved from NCES website. https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/browse.aspx?y=56, (Retrieved 8/26/2025.)

[8] Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP 2020). (n.d.) Retrieved from NCES website. https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/cipdetail.aspx?y=56&cip=13, (Retrieved 8/26/2025.)

Appendix C. References

SARA Data Reporting Handbook for Institutions: Fall 2025 Distance Education Enrollment & 2025 Out-of-State Learning Placements, https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2025-02/Data_Reporting_Handbook_FINAL_2_6_25.pdf

Straut, T. and Boeke, M. (2020). *NC-SARA Data Report: Fall 2019 Distance Education Enrollment & 2019 Out-of-State Learning Placements*, p. 17-23. https://nc-sara.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-01/NC-SARA.AnnualDataReport.December2020_01.06.21.pdf

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U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *IPEDS Glossary for 2026-2027 Data Collection System* (n.d.), https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/glossary